

CITY OF STAMFORD 19TH CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION FINANCE COMMITTEE

Shelley Michelson, Chair

Members

Susan Halpern
Steven Kolenberg
Alex Martinez
Clemon Williams

MEETING REPORT

Wednesday, September 21, 2022
7:00 P.M.

This meeting was conducted remotely

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 P.M. In attendance were Commissioners Kolenberg, Martinez, Williams and Michelson. Because our invited guest, Anita Carpenter, informed the Committee that she would be joining the meeting late due to an unexpected prior conflict, a motion to Suspend the Rules to introduce a new agenda item was made by Commissioner Kolenberg and seconded by Commissioner Williams and was approved unanimously.

Thereafter, Commissioner Kolenberg gave a report concerning his research on Participatory Budgeting. He reported examples of typical projects implemented: repairing potholes, community center improvements, and area beautification. Cities that have implemented this process include New York City, Paris, Toronto, Boston, Hartford (quality of life projects) and Vallejo, California. Commissioner Kolenberg will continue his research and report back to the Committee at a subsequent meeting.

Anita Carpenter joined the Committee at 7:46 P.M. She reported that the grants office is the primary outreach department for state and federal grants and is responsible for funding and programmatic reports and all aspects of grant administration. Awarded grants go through the appropriation process with the Board of Finance and the Board of Representatives. Stamford's annual budgets assume the continuation of grants that are annual in nature (e.g., fire training), but do not include grants for which Stamford is competing for the funds. Ms. Carpenter reports that the public health grants are the most difficult to administer.

The grants process can take several avenues: some departments approach the grants office for grants; some departments write their own grants. The Grants Office is open for assistance to all departments seeking grants. Some grants are regional in nature and the City of Stamford acts as fiduciary for regional allocations, such as bomb squad (Stamford), Hazmat (Wilton). The related resources are shared by the municipalities in the region.

The grants office also administers construction-related grants for the Board of Education, but the Board of Education has its own staff for administration of operating related grants. The Grants Office does not handle the Micro Grant Program in which the City has allocated a total of \$75,000 in funds in 2022 to not for profit and other groups, in amounts ranging from a low of \$1,150 to a high of \$10,000. The grants office also does not oversee the HUD Community Development Block Grants which are administered by the Housing and Community Development Department. *A discussion was held on whether all grants shall be administered by the Grants Department.*

The grants office adheres strictly to the record retention policies for grants which vary from 3 to 6 years, depending upon the source of the grants. An equipment inventory is maintained for up to 10 years for equipment and asset disposition is specified under the terms of each grant.

Ms. Carpenter suggested a sensible administrative change in the approach to grant funding be instituted in which the Grants Office would propose grants to the Board of Finance and the Board of Representatives and gain approval before applying for those grants to avoid after the fact rejection by either body of successful grant awards. Rejection of grant awards is recorded in a federal database and could jeopardize the City's ability to obtain future grant awards.

Ms. Carpenter believes that a biennial budget could be beneficial. As an example, when grants are funding positions for a year and the grant terminates, then the Boards must approve additional funding in a subsequent fiscal year to retain those positions. A biennial budget could anticipate the need to fund those positions in the second year to avoid losing valuable personnel. The new Oracle database will be helpful in tracking grants under administration.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kolenberg to approve the minutes from the Committee meeting of September 7, 2022 which was seconded by Commissioner Williams, and approved unanimously. Commissioner Kolenberg, noticing that there was a typographical error in the agenda for the meeting of September 21, made a motion to correct #10 on the agenda to change the date to September 7, 2022. Commissioner Martinez seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Williams and was seconded by Commissioner Martinez. Upon a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Commissioner Michelson

This meeting is available on [video](#).